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ABSTRACT

The three issues of the periodic newsletter contain professional news, program descriptions, and articles addressing issues in English language training for limited-English-proficient workers. Topics include educating refugees and immigrants for work, techniques for combining language development with career awareness, the design of a successful welfare-to-work program, and several conferences on employment-focused adult education. (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education) (MSE)

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# "Learning a Living"

Periodic News Bulletin ~ Brigitte Marshall ~ Consultant
English Language Training for Employment Participation Project
511 Cornell Avenue, Albany, CA

No. 13-15
1999

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Brigitte Marshall

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"LEARNING A LIVING" No.13. 1999
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## Educating for Careers

Refugees and immigrants now have reduced access to English language training in the context of CalWORKs. Language and basic skills training programs to which welfare recipients can be referred need to be short-term, intensive, employment-focused and with specific work outcomes. Specific skills training is certainly part of what it takes to secure and upgrade employment. However, in the environment created by welfare reform, adult education programs also have an important role to play in ensuring that refugees and immigrants have a range of general, transferable employment skills. Such individuals need to have knowledge and awareness about their own interests and aptitudes and the career pathways that they can pursue from the basis of an initial, entry level job position. This issue of "Learning a Living" examines some strategies and resources being utilized in local adult education programs to ensure that refugee and immigrant students have the necessary skills and information to carry them beyond the first job and the ability to apply skills in a variety of different work situations.

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## Combining Language Development with Career Awareness

Lisa Agao, Fresno Adult School

***This article was adapted from a presentation made at the California Career Pathways Consortia Statewide Conference on February 1, 1999, in Sacramento.***

While Fresno Adult School has incorporated a variety of career education activities into both the ESL and ABE programs, we are still primarily concerned with developing the basic education skills that are the **foundation** for employment. In response to welfare reform and our students' desire to prepare for a job (or a better job), we are shifting the context of our curriculum away from general life skills toward broad employability skills. Our curriculum still contains the primary academic skills in terms of developing listening, speaking, reading, writing, and math. However, the **context** for developing these skills has changed. In the past, many of our classroom activities were focused on topics such as shopping for food at the store or reading a mall directory. Now, our activities include conducting an inventory of supplies at a "distribution center" or reading stories about people who work in various occupations.

### Student Success Stories

One of our goals is to connect our student population with realistic examples of people working in our community. We use Student Success Stories to share examples of "real" people our students can relate to. The students in the success stories have similar barriers to self sufficiency such as language barriers, refugee experience, welfare reliance,

single parent challenges, abusive relationships, and alcohol and substance abuse. I solicited teachers for referrals of student success stories. I then interviewed the students, took pictures of the students at their work site, half toned the pictures to include in the story and duplicated them by the thousand. They were distributed to ESL and ABE students in adult education programs across Fresno county.

The students were often currently enrolled at school. Therefore, follow-up interviews were easy to obtain. Students could informally ask the current subject of a student success story questions or the teacher could follow up with more facilitated discussion. Each month students would look forward to seeing one of their own highlighted and their experience valued.

Follow-up activities were encouraged. Field trip information was included in some of the student success stories. Students would take field trips to the places of employment featured in the stories. Teachers incorporated Language Experience activities about the field trip. Students would dictate, read, and write stories about the jobs they visited. The teachers would also use the Student Success Story as a template to make additional success stories of students in their own classrooms. A variety of language exercises were also included with the Student Success Stories. The exercises provided, for example, reinforcement of grammatical structures. Teachers were encouraged to expand the exercises creatively based on students' abilities and needs. In this way, career education becomes the context for a variety of reading, writing, listening and speaking language development activities.

**Work Interest Inventory**

New students entering our ESL program attend a two-week assessment and orientation program. Initially the focus of the orientation was to assess students' academic skills and orient students to our school systems and procedures. However, in response to welfare reform, we decided that it was imperative to incorporate work interest inventories and general career education into our two-week program.

However, we found that most work interest tools were either too difficult because of the academic skills required, too confusing because of the ambiguous pictures being used, or too time consuming with intensive one-one-one interaction. Therefore, we began to adapt materials and create new materials to fit the needs of our program.

The first inventory we adapted was similar to the Janus Employability Skills Work Interest Inventory[1]. We rewrote the statements identified with various career clusters so that the statements were more basic. Then we translated the inventory into the students' native languages. The inventory is also a great tool to teach students about charting and graphing results. Students fill out the inventory and graph themselves. After students have identified themselves with a career cluster, they read a short paragraph about common jobs and activities in that cluster. This too is provided in the students' native language. Finally, the teacher can group students by common cluster interests and provide members in each cluster with a student success story that correlates to that cluster. This activity provides students with an introduction to individual work interests, the concept of career clusters, and methods for identifying, organizing and documenting work interests.

While there are a variety of published work interest inventories on the market, I

think there is great value in creating one with your students. This helps students to begin thinking of common activities associated with clusters of occupational areas. You can choose a limited number of occupational clusters to focus on and then facilitate a way to solicit statements that describe common activities in each cluster or pathway. The statements can be arranged in a variety of different ways so that students can read each statement, evaluate their own interest in the activity, rate the activity, and total the ratings for each cluster. It is valuable to incorporate different ways of documenting the results that are interesting to the students using charts or graphs.

### Pictorial Career Pathways Unit[2]

In addition to our use of work interest inventories, we still found the need to provide additional support materials about specific jobs for use in the classroom. Therefore, I participated in the development of the Pictorial Career Pathways unit funded through the State Center Consortium. Our desire in developing the unit was to provide realistic visuals introducing a variety of jobs in the eight career pathways. Many of the student success story pictures were used in the development of this project. We also wanted to provide basic information about each job similar to what is commonly provided in resources such as the Occupational Outlook Handbook. Therefore, education requirements, income levels, and other basic information were included with the pictures of each job. This basic information was also provided in an icon format so that limited English readers who are familiar with the symbols can obtain basic information about each job.

The job pictures and descriptions were arranged on individual cards. Students sort cards into 'like' and 'dislike' piles and then sort the like piles into the various career pathways. This activity is useful to students who need more reflection time than is allowed in video interest inventories and it provides more visual clues than a pencil/paper inventory can provide. After students identify the pathways of primary interest they can read the cards to find out basic information about the jobs in each pathway.

The Pictorial Career Pathway unit also further develops the concepts of a job verses a career, career ladders, and continuing education. Teachers can easily reproduce the individual job cards on the copy machine. In addition to this, a video was produced that allows a teacher to give an interest inventory activity (similar to VIAS[3]) to the entire class at the same time. This unit is designed to be a basic career reference tool for both teachers and students.

The information in this article is offered as encouragement to other agencies that are interested in undertaking a similar process for the development of career education materials that are accessible and useful to limited English speakers and specific to the local employment market. Anyone can start it simply by having a camera handy at all times. Decide on the occupational pathways and jobs that need to be included in an inventory of jobs in your community. Whenever possible, interview the subjects to get as much information about the jobs and the avenues that people traveled to get them. Until your inventory is complete, (and it never will be) provide the pictures as occupational stories to your students. Make sure that the photograph is half-toned (on the computer or at a professional printer service) so that the pictures are clear and can be reproduced on a copy machine. Try and get several shots of the work site. The pictures should be action shots of people actually doing some activity common to that job. A good picture will have many clues in it to provide students with as much information as possible about the job. Eventually, your inventory of

pictures will build. Next, get current occupational information from handbooks, the Internet web sites (Employment Development Department), or software programs such as ERISS[4]. Include the occupational information with each picture in both a written and an icon format that your students will be able to understand. You create the icons from clip art or graphics that you have on software. Finally, photocopy the cards and laminate them for reuse. Students can be grouped by occupational pathway and do a variety of activities using the basic information you provide such as filling out basic questions about occupations, creating a career ladder, and researching other related jobs.

### Collaboration

A word about funding and collaboration: ESL teachers often incorporate a variety of collaborative, problem-solving types of activities to facilitate language learning. We know that the product of a group of people can often be better than the efforts of individuals. I have also seen the value of collaboration between agencies and education service providers. Our school worked collaboratively with Fresno County Office of Education and the State Center Consortium who funded the development and reproduction of the Pictorial Career Pathways. This collaboration provided us with money, experience, and tools that we would not have had alone. We continue to find that collaboration with a variety of agencies is necessary to improve our curriculum and legitimize our efforts to teach our students English and prepare them for work.

### Collaboration in the Community

A large distribution center came to Fresno recently. In an effort to prepare students to interview for jobs with the distribution center, we developed a job club geared toward the distribution industry. The company was looking for entry level employees who had experience working with radio frequency guns and touch screen computers neither of which we could provide. The technology included with warehousing and distribution now requires that students have an orientation toward these tools. Therefore, we contacted a chain discount store that had both the RF guns and touch screen computers. They were willing to allow us to bring limited numbers of students into their store to orient them toward these two technologies. The touch screen computer was used to identify the name of someone who is registered in the store for baby or shower gifts. The RF gun was used to set up the registry by scanning items in the store that we included in a "phantom" registry. The store was very cooperative and "education friendly."

Collaboration within the community allowed us to orient students with limited experience with the technology that was common to the distribution center. It was not a time-consuming activity that required a lot of work. But it was necessary to make the connection in order to have access to these types of tools in the community.

### Occupational Cluster Inventory

Fresno Adult School was planning to put together a career fair. We were interested in inviting a variety of businesses to set up booths. However, we needed to know the interests of our students. Were they primarily interested in Business, Agriculture, Home Economics or other areas? Therefore, we developed an occupational cluster inventory. It was very simple. We grouped clip art pictures of jobs in the same pathway on one page. We made an overhead of the pathway. We introduced the pathway to the students and briefly discussed the clip art pictures. Then we asked for a show of hands for the number of

students who were interested in learning more about that pathway. We totaled all our ESL and ABE classes for each pathway using these simple overheads. We also found this to be a good tool for introducing the concept of a career pathway.

### Work Boxes

While most of the language learning took place in our classrooms using very traditional academic materials such as workbooks, stories, cassettes, video, and computer software we also began to incorporate workplace materials into the classroom. The workplace materials were literally nuts and bolts, screwdrivers and screws, and a variety of miscellaneous supplies. We used a text titled Work Boxes[5] as a guide to creating a set of activities that included sorting, packaging, assembling, filling out inventories, creating signs, and measuring.

These activities were designed to develop general workplace skills with general workplace simulations. Students work in teams. They are each assigned a role such as timekeeper, secretary, supervisor, or worker. Team members progress through a variety of activities of varying difficulty levels. Students are required to keep track and record their progress through the tasks. The activities also give students a chance to evaluate their role as a team player. They can actually experience the dynamics of problem solving as a group and feel the pressure of trying to meet a deadline. These activities help us introduce the culture of work in the classroom.

### Tool Interest Inventory

After students have had the opportunity to work with a variety of tools, they can begin to keep a record of the tools they enjoy working with and the tools they don't. Pictures of tools can be photocopied for each student. Students simply divide the tools into two piles and then list the tools on a like or dislike list. Pictures of tools are also a good way of reinforcing the idea of job clusters. Similar types of tools are common to similar types of work. Therefore, teachers can ask students to find all the tools that may be useful in, for example, Agriculture. The more ways that we can reinforce the connections between common skills, common activities, common tools, and common environments the more our students will begin to identify their own particular interests and aptitudes within particular pathways.

***For more information on the ideas and activities in this article, contact Lisa Agao at Fresno Adult School (559) 248 7010 Ext 364, or by e-mail:agaofam@pacbell.net***

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## The Design and Evolution of a Welfare-to-Work Program

Merced Adult School

***This article was adapted from information provided by administrators and instructional staff at Merced Adult School.***

The program described in this article is part of a collaborative initiative between Merced Human Services Agency (HSA), the Private Industry Training Department (PITD), Merced Adult Education Program, the Community College and the Regional Occupational Program (ROP). The objective of the initiative is to move welfare recipient participants from dependence to self-sufficient employment in 12-24 months. The program requires student participation 32 hours per week. This includes basic skills and vocational training leading to work experience. As part of the initiative a sewing class for refugee participants was initiated in response to the potential availability of sewing factory jobs in the Merced area. The class is currently in session. The Southeast

Asian women referred to the class range in age from 20-50 years. Most of them are Hmong and their English language skills range from a literacy level to an ABE level. The class is open-entry, with the potential of new students being added every 2 weeks.

The class was originally designed to be a short-term (8 week) training, focusing on the specific language and skills needed in a garment factory environment. SCANS-oriented activities were used to inform students about the world of work. Vocabulary and task checklists were developed using VESL materials. During the training, students "learned by doing". Sewing machines, both home and industrial, were provided for the students' use. As they learned the English vocabulary for sewing terms and techniques, they practiced them. Students learned the basics of working on an assembly line and the process involved in breaking a task down to its individual parts. The students participated in community service sewing projects including sewing name patches on Junior League Football jerseys, making beanbags for a leadership class and mending uniforms for the county Juvenile Facility. For their participation, they received a letter of thanks to be included with their resumes.

Unfortunately, after several months of training, the sewing jobs at the factories were not materializing. It was recognized that a more comprehensive, overall grasp of English would be required in other types of jobs i.e.; working in a retail fabric store or alterations shop. This realization brought about an evolution of the program. The sewing vocabulary and SCANS activities are still a daily part of the lessons. However, rather than concurrently teaching the English for sewing and facilitating "hands-on practice", there is now a focus on intensive language instruction first. Then, once a student has reached a basic level of competence in English, she can advance to the short-term practical instruction in sewing, leading to the ROP connection and community classroom placement. This redesigned program has only been in effect for a short time, but the students seem to be enjoying the reading portion of class and also understand the priority of learning English first. Instead of a multilevel class, an instructor was added and students are divided by language level for 2/3 of the class time. Three of the students have moved on to the ROP section, one has been placed at a community classroom site and the other will be going out into the world of work very soon.

***For more information on this program, contact Debbie Glass at Merced Adult School: (209) 385-6524***

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**Making Low Income Work Liveable**

Many entry level jobs will not, on their own, provide sufficient income or benefits for welfare recipients to adequately support themselves and their families. Life-time limits on receipt of welfare assistance apply, regardless of the health of a local job market or the accessability of jobs that provide a living wage and benefits. In addition to ongoing training in adult education programs and at the work site, it is imperative that low income workers take advantage of tax credit and health insurance programs that are available to them. Language and skills training programs can facilitate dissemination of this kind of information to their students. The importance of these sources of support and further contact information are described in the next section of this bulletin.

## Earned Income Tax Credit

Peter Daniels, Catholic Charities,
Orange County

With few exceptions, working refugees and immigrants are eligible for a Federal income tax credit called the Earned Income Credit or EIC. For a single individual between the ages of 25 and 64, the maximum EIC is $341. For a family with one qualifying child the maximum EIC is $2,271 and for a family with two or more qualifying children, the maximum EIC is $3,756. These are maximums, so even one dollar earned receives a credit. This credit is in addition to any taxes paid and refunded.

The Earned Income Credit is designed to subsidize minimum wage jobs in lieu of raising the minimum wage and all the problems associated with such a move. If a working refugee with 2 qualifying dependents works a 40-hour per week job at $5.75 per hour for the entire year (earning $11,960), then the family would be eligible for a **$3,756 EIC**. If the EIC and annual wage are added together and divided by a 2080-hour work year, the job ends up paying $7.56 per hour. This clearly represents a big incentive for taking an entry level job and the first step toward self sufficiency.

In order to collect the credit, a worker must have reportable, earned income. The individual who works "under the table" is therefore not eligible. It is often the case that employers who treat employees as contract workers without providing a 1099 or W-2 end of year statement of wages are not reporting their income to the IRS. The employees are losing out on EIC and Social Security contributions to their future retirement. This is an excellent time to provide information to refugees and immigrants so that they can utilize the EIC to transition to legitimate employment where their employment rights will be guaranteed. State law requires companies to withhold for Social Security, Unemployment Benefits and Workers' Compensation. Refugees like all other workers deserve these basic, hard-won rights.

The EIC Campaign Outreach Strategy Guide is available through the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.[6] The guide contains the literature and forms to start your own information outlet. Some of the flyers are available in a variety of languages. To offer assistance with tax returns, the IRS has volunteers who help specific communities with consultations and preparation of returns every year.

With reformed welfare-to-work programs in full bloom, the EIC is one of the best motivational tools for trainers and educators working with limited English proficient individuals preparing for employment.

In Orange County we are in the process of developing a VESL curriculum to make information on the EIC more accessible to limited English speaking individuals. For more information, contact Peter Daniels at (714) 635-5230, E-mail: peteresa@ccoc.org

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## The Healthy Families Program

***The following information has been adapted from a Healthy Families promotional flyer, "Facts at a Glance."***

On July 1, 1998, California's New Healthy Families Program joined forces with Medi-Cal for Children to provide low-cost and no-cost comprehensive health care coverage to the state's most vulnerable population - low-income, uninsured children under 19 years of age. Parents may enroll their children in either the Healthy Families

Program or Medi-cal for Children, depending upon which they are eligible for, by filling out a mail-in application that is available in 10 languages. A simplified, revised version of the application form will be available by the end of April.

**A toll-free number (1-888-747-1222)** provides easy access to trained staff who can help families complete the application.

**Eligibility**

Children are eligible if:

- They are between the ages of one and nineteen;
- They are California residents and U.S. citizens or eligible qualified aliens; (refugees qualify).
- Their annual family income is between 100 and 200 percent of the federal poverty level ($16,450 to $32, 900 for a family of four);
- They are not eligible for no-cost, full-scope Medi-Cal; and
- They have not been covered by employer-sponsored insurance for the preceding three months.

**Benefits**

- Full coverage for preventive care, hospitalization, physician, medical and surgical services, as well as prescription drugs.
- Dental, hearing and vision coverage.
- Affordable monthly premiums, ranging from $4 - $9 per child to a maximum of $27 per family.
- Co-payments of $5 (no co-payment for preventive care services or hospital services).

***For more information on the Healthy Families Program, call 1 800 880 5305***


1. Work Interest Inventories
Janus Employability Skills Program Job Planner, by Wing Jew, Robert Tong, 1995.
Globe Fearon ISBN 0-8359-1414-3

2. Pictorial Career Pathways Unit - Outreach and Guidance Project, 1998,
State Center Consortium, 390 West Fir Avenue, Clovis, CA 93611.
Contact Julie Preston-Smith - (559) 323-4641

3. VIAS - Video Interest Assessment Center
New Concepts Corp., 2341 S. Fiebus, Suite 14, Tuscon, AZ 85713
Tel (602) 323-6645 Toll Free (808) 828-7876

4. ERISS on line - http:www.eriss.com/eriss.htm
Employment Development Department on line -http://www.calmis.cahwnet.gov

5. Work Boxes by Lee Hamill and Ann Dunlevy, 1993,
Walch ISBN 0-8251-2326-7

6. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 820 First Street, NE, Suite 510; Washington, DC 20077-0534. E-mail: center@center.cbpp.org

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## 10th Annual Refugee Information Exchange Conference Special English Language Training Day

The California Department of Social Services' Office of Community Relations is hosting the Tenth Annual Refugee Information Exchange Conference on September 1-3, 1999, at the San Diego Marriott Mission Valley. The conference will be preceded by a special English Language Training (ELT) day on Tuesday, August 31, 1999. The theme for the day is:

**English Language Learners and Career Education.**

It is designed for individuals who work with refugees and immigrants in an English-as-a-Second Language and/or Employment Preparation training setting. The registration fee for the ELT day is $35.

**English Language Learners and Career Education: Training Day Overview:**

To reach and maintain a position of self-sufficiency, refugee and immigrant English language learners must hold a dual focus which includes immediate employment and ongoing education and training. Employment advancement is often limited by a lack of basic understanding of job titles and duties and cultural considerations. Traditional career education materials often confuse English language learners who are unfamiliar with the concepts of career pathways and job clusters and the use of career aptitude and interest inventory tests.

During this interactive training day, participants will have the opportunity to participate in sessions that examine a variety of strategies for integrating into ESL instruction both workplace know-how skills and career development competencies that will assist students to move beyond an entry-level "work first" focus to an ongoing, career development orientation.

Presenters will be invited to address the following topics:

- **WorkStyles - Pre-Employment for the Low Level English Speaker**
  **Spring Institute for International Studies, Denver, Colorado**

WorkStyles is a two-week intensive course focusing on pre-employability and personal effectiveness; it addresses the barriers to learning created by lack of confidence and self-esteem. Employment preparation content material provides the context for learning and acquiring English language skills in this program.

- **Recertification of Refugee Professionals - Project STAR**
  **International Institute of Metropolitan St. Louis**

Project STAR offers qualified refugees a program of assistance with credentialing and job upgrading. Employed refugees with 12 or more years of education plus professional or technical qualifications are provided assistance with the process of academic document translation and evaluation, identification of appropriate and related job fields and certification as necessary.

- **Pictorial Career Pathways Unit**
  **State Center Consortium, Clovis, California**

The need for career education materials designed for limited English speaking students prompted the development of this resource. It utilizes photographs instead of drawings and symbols to

visually represent North American occupations. Supplemental career pathway activities that rely on movement, visual skills and group participation are incorporated in to the unit to reinforce career awareness and planning.

- **Combining Language Development with Career Awareness**

An overview of strategies and resources that programs have used to ensure that refugee and immigrant students have the necessary skills and information to carry them beyond their first job. Student Success Stories, Work Interest Inventories, Occupational Cluster Inventories, Tool Interest Inventories and Work Boxes will be described and demonstrated.

- **Practical Challenges**

Making low-income work liveable requires refugees and immigrants to make efficient use of a wide variety of resources. Information on these resources is not always easy to access or understand for English language learners Refugee assistance and education agencies in Orange County have collaborated to develop accessible, user-friendly ESL curriculum which explains the Earned Income Tax Credit. This session will also profile the Healthy Families Program which provides low cost health insurance to children in low-income working families and efforts that have been undertaken by education agencies to disseminate information on the program more effectively to English language learners.

- **Cultural Considerations**

A panel of individuals will speak about providing employment oriented ESL services to Bosnian, Russian, Somali, Kurdish and Iraqi refugees.

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## Healthy Families and Public Charge Issues

Previous issues of this news bulletin (No. 12 & No. 13) have provided information on the Healthy Families Program - a low cost health insurance program for children from families with low income. Fear of losing access to health insurance, especially for children, has historically been one of the strongest disincentives for welfare recipients to make the transition from welfare reliance to self-sufficient employment.

Despite vigorous outreach efforts, enrollment in the Healthy Families Program has fallen far short of the total number of children estimated to be eligible for it in California. Immigration attorneys have warned that there has been no guarantee from the federal government that immigrants who use public health insurance will not be denied citizenship or deported. Potential applicants for such programs fear that they may be deemed "public charges" and required for example, to pay back the U.S. Treasury if they ever tried to become U.S. citizens.

On Tuesday, May 25, 1999, the Clinton Administration issued a policy directive, effective immediately which guarantees that legal immigrants may get public housing, food stamps and health insurance for their children without jeopardizing their current immigration status or chances of becoming U.S. citizens in the future. The application procedure for Healthy Families has been streamlined and simplified to a four page format. For more information on the Health Families Program, call: 1 800 880 5305.

For more information on the Public Charge issue and to request community education materials in different languages, contact the Publications Department of the National Immigration Law Center, (213) 639-3900 Ext.3.

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## A Report From: English Language Learners and Career Education San Diego ~ August 1999

On Tuesday, August 31, 1999, 75 individuals with an interest in employment focused education and training came together in San Diego to discuss issues surrounding English Language Learners and Career Education. The General Session that kicked off this interactive training day provided an overview of the reasons why Career Education needs to be considered a critical part of what it will take to move limited English speakers into sustainable employment, off the welfare rolls and out of poverty.

In addition to the research studies and reports referred to in the General Session, many of the issues addressed on August 31, are also echoed by some more recent research studies that are summarized below.

## Common Themes ~ Critical Issues

The National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL) has released a report called ***Welfare, Jobs, and Basic Skills: The Employment Prospects of Welfare Recipients in the Most Populous U.S. Counties.*** The report evaluates the basic skills and employment prospects of adults receiving welfare benefits through Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). It underscores the acute need for improved basic skills among current and former welfare recipients, regardless of whether they are still on the welfare rolls. It concludes that, because of their low literacy skills, it is unrealistic to assume that all TANF recipients can easily find full-time, full-year jobs. The research also predicts that even if all TANF recipients could find full-time jobs, they would still earn less than the income level needed to provide subsistence living for their families.

The report finds that TANF recipients generally have very low basic skills, as measured by the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS). The NALS tested individuals' ability to apply reading and math skills to tasks common in daily life, such as reading comprehension, basic math, the ability to fill out forms, and the ability to read charts and graphs. The NALS then categorized individuals into one of five literacy levels, with Level 1 being the lowest.



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According to ***Welfare, Jobs, and Basic Skills,*** 35 percent of TANF recipients are at Level 1, and 41 percent are at Level 2. Individuals at Level 1 are generally able to do simple tasks, such as locating the expiration date on a driver's license, signing their name, or totaling a bank deposit slip, but they are not able to do Level 2 tasks, such as locating an intersection on a street map, totaling costs on an order form, or understanding an appliance warranty. Adults at Level 2 cannot generally perform high-order tasks such as writing a letter explaining a billing error, using a bus schedule, or using a calculator to determine a 10 percent discount. Individuals at both Levels 1 and 2 are generally not adequately equipped to meet the literacy demands of daily life, and their low skills can interfere with their ability to get and keep a job.

The report emphasizes the acute need for basic skills training and education for both current and former welfare recipients for several reasons. In areas where there are not enough low-skilled jobs available for all welfare recipients in the area to become employed, recipients will need to improve their skills. Even in those areas with enough low-skilled jobs, welfare recipients' low levels of basic skills make them ineligible for better paying jobs.

***This report can be ordered from NCSALL at NCSALL/World Education, Attn: Kim French, 44 Farnsworth Street, Boston, MA 02210-1211. It can also be found online at www.milken-inst.org***

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The Educational Testing Service has released a report called ***Getting Down to Business: Matching Welfare Recipients' Skills to Jobs that Train***. The report finds that although the booming economy has created enough jobs to absorb welfare recipients with higher skills, the prospects of those with low skills are bleak and will only get bleaker. It reports a stark mismatch between many welfare recipients' skills and the skills required for jobs that lead to self-sufficiency. This is because there will be an oversupply of 3.9 million low-skilled workers by 2006 according to projections.

The report divides TANF recipients into three categories by skill level.

(1) **Competent:** This includes those with strong enough skills to get jobs where work experience and employer-provided training will spur further income mobility. This group includes 32 percent of TANF recipients and correlates to NALS Level 3, or skills at the level of at least some post secondary education.

(2) **Minimal:** This includes recipients who are employable but probably not in jobs "with a future." This includes 37 percent of TANF recipients and correlates with NALS Level 2, or skills similar to those of high school graduates in the lower half of their class.

(3) **Basic:** This includes those with such low skills that they find it hard to get jobs at all, much less jobs with mobility. This group includes 31 percent of TANF recipients and correlates with NALS Level 1, or skills similar to those who have not graduated from high school or the equivalent.

The report finds that projections for new jobs by skill level through 2006 reveal a looming mismatch between workers' skills and requirements of new jobs. Seventy percent of

the new jobs created through 2006 - 12.9 million new jobs - will very likely be generated in occupations where today's incumbent workers demonstrate skills in the "competent" range, similar to those with at least some post secondary education, which most welfare recipients do not have.

Fewer than 10 percent of new jobs created through 2006 will be in the "minimal" skill range, and just over 20 percent will be in the "basic" skill range. The oversupply of these least-skilled workers in the future is likely to result in either lower wages or higher unemployment.

The report goes on to analyze the employment prospects of welfare recipients in each of the three categories. It predicts that recipients with the highest skills (i.e. those in the "competent" skill range) will be able to find and keep "good" jobs. Marginal increases in education and training for the most skilled welfare recipients could yield substantial returns, potentially moving them off the welfare rolls permanently. By investing in up to 200 hours of education or training, these recipients could move into jobs that pay up to $10,000 more annually. The report strongly recommends that these recipients seek jobs that offer training.

There are also likely to be jobs for recipients in the second group (the "minimal" skill range), but they will have increasing difficulty obtaining career ladder jobs, and requirements needed to continue their growth may be beyond their reach. Recipients in these jobs receive an average, annual salary of $19,000. Few receive training from their employer. Again, 200 hours of education or training could have a significant economic impact, and the report strongly encourages them to seek jobs that provide on-the-job-training.

The bottom tier of recipients (the "basic" skill range) are employable only in the least skilled, lowest-paid jobs, such as cleaners, maids, grounds keepers, and hand packers. Jobs that offer a living wage are out of reach, with individuals in this group who are employed earning an average, annual salary of $15,200. Available jobs provide work experience but little further training. As a result, these recipients' prospects for upward mobility are extremely limited. Event to boost these recipients' skills to the next level, they may need up to 900 hours (more than two years full-time) of course work.

While investing in significant education and training for the lowest-skilled recipients would be very beneficial, the authors of the report conclude that it is unlikely due to the high cost. Therefore, a more realistic goal for this group is to **improve counseling and support services that assist these recipients in getting and keeping jobs - thus breaking the cycle of drifting between public assistance and low-paying jobs.**

The report concludes that **work alone is not enough**, particularly for recipients with the lowest skills. More time on the job will not appreciably increase the low-skilled workers' earnings unless their jobs provide training. It suggests that it is time for the "work first" philosophy of welfare reform to be replaced with "think first" philosophy. "Think first" is defined as using **job placement and counseling that is customized to each individual and includes identifying welfare recipients' skills, identifying skills needed for available jobs, and trying to match the two.** Lastly, in

order to help recipients earn higher incomes and keep their jobs longer, it recommends **introducing recipients to solid information about realistic career paths and goals in order to help them envision and achieve a means to self sufficiency.**

***This report can be ordered at no cost from the Educational Testing Service at Communication Services, Mail Stop 50-D, Rosedale Road, Princeton, NJ 08541 or online at www.ets.org***

*(These report summaries have been adapted from information contained in the July 28, 1999 Issue of* ***Policy Update*** *from the National Institute for Literacy).*

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## Support for the Concept of Three Inter-related, Mutually Supportive Outcomes for the ESL Classroom.

***"Introduce welfare recipients to solid information about realistic career paths and goals in order to help them envision and achieve a means to self sufficiency."***

The first objective of ESL instructors is to promote development of learners' comprehension and use of the English language. For several years now adult educators have been acknowledging a second objective - the need to develop "workplace know-how" in ESL students to more appropriately prepare them for the behavioral demands of the workplace. It is the third objective that responds to the recommendation re-stated above, made in the ETS study. The need to use employment related content material as the context for ESL instruction provided the framework for discussions between presenters and participants in the English Language Learners and Career Education Training Event.

One participant noted on the evaluation form that while it continues to be important to acknowledge the need for SCANS integration and the development of "workplace know-how" in the ESL classroom, it is equally important to respond to the urgent needs of welfare recipient language learners by making informed decisions about the content material used in the ESL classroom as the context for language instruction.

Several sessions discussed how ESL classes can include content material that exposes language learners to career options while also helping them to determine what kind of employment related skills, aptitudes and interests they have.

Sessions also examined some of the issues that welfare recipients must confront in order to make low income work livable - the very practical steps that individuals must take beyond securing an entry level position in order to actually achieve sustainable self sufficiency. For example, the need to take advantage of programs such as the Earned Income Credit and Healthy Families - low cost health insurance for children. While participants and presenters all acknowledged that it is not appropriate for ESL instructors to play the role of career counselors, or tax preparers, it was agreed that information about these issues provides an excellent, meaningful and useful context for language instruction. In its first report of June 1991, ***What Work Requires of Schools***, the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills



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(SCANS) recommended, "...after examining the findings of cognitive science, that the most effective way of learning skills is "in context," placing learning objectives within a real environment rather than insisting that students first learn in the abstract what they will be expected to apply."

In addition to the topics covered during the Training Day, participants suggested the following resources for identifying "real environments" in which to place ESL learning objectives.

- Consumer Action - Materials for Life Skills available in English and also in multiple different languages - Excellent web site with opportunity to download documents and comprehensive resource information.
  717 Market Street, #310
  San Francisco, CA 94103
  Tel: (415) 777-9635
  www.consumer-action.org

- AAA - Limited quantities of free maps available to teachers for classroom use - call your local AAA office to make a request.

- The Council on Family Health - Read-the-Medication-Label ESL Kits
  225 Park Avenue South
  Suite 1700
  New York, NY 10003

- The Census Bureau - Free Classroom Kits - For more information on promotion, materials available, census jobs, and census speakers, call California's regional partnership coordinator: Reina Ornelas - Tel: (818) 904-6522. Or, contact one of the partners in the California Asian and Pacific Islander Census 2000 Network.
  **Statewide lead:** Asian Pacific American Legal Center: Tel: (213) 748-2022
  **Santa Clara Valley Region:** Asian Law Alliance: Tel: (408) 287-9710
  **San Francisco/Central Valley Regions:** Asian Law Caucus: Tel: (415) 391-1655
  **Los Angeles Region:** Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council: Tel: (213) 617-2665
  **Orange County Region:** Asian Pacific Islander Community Alliance: Tel: (714) 636-9095
  **San Diego Region:** Union of Pan Asian Communities: Tel: (619) 232 6454.

- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities - Earned Income Credit Campaign. The 2000 EIC Outreach Campaign Kit which addresses the 1999 tax year will be available soon. Complete kits including posters are available in English and Spanish, flyers are available in a wide variety of other languages.
  Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
  820 First Street, NE, Suite 510
  Washington, D.C. 20002
  Tel: (202) 408-1080
  Fax: (202) 408-1056
  E-mail - center@center.cbpp.org
  http://www.cbpp.org

***Other ideas from participants for "real" contexts for language development***

- Local child care resources and options - community materials on selecting appropriate child care services, doing background checks on providers etc.
- Local transportation options - car pools, public transportation etc.
- United Way Community Resources
- Animal Control Licenses and Services
- Cooperative Extension Programs through the U.C. System

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## Coming Soon!

The next issue of Learning a Living will profile ESL programs that have been working in collaboration with other agencies to provide an integrated approach to employment preparation for limited English speakers. In this kind of approach job development and counseling or job readiness training is interpreted as an opportunity to develop language skills at the same time, and ESL classes are an opportunity to gain access to important employment related content information, practice "workplace know-how" skills and explore employment options and career aptitudes.

Are you involved with a program that fits this description? If so, please be in touch so that a description of the program can be included in the next issue of this bulletin.